

General Shelter FAQs

Where do the animals in the shelter come from?

The Loudoun County Animal Shelter is an open-access shelter, meaning we take in any and all animals that are surrendered by Loudoun County resident or are found stray in Loudoun County, regardless of reason or circumstance.

How long are animals held before making them available for adoption?

Virginia and County law requires that all stray dogs and puppies remain at the shelter for a minimum of 10 business days (not including days the shelter is closed) so their owner will have an opportunity to reclaim them. Stray cats and kittens without identification are only required to stay for a minimum of 5 days. Animals that have been surrendered by their owners are held for at least 24 hours to give the owner an opportunity to reclaim their pet if they reconsider.

Animals are not placed on the adoption floor as soon as they come in to the shelter -- they are given at least 24-72 hours to "settle in" and allow time to assess their behavior and make sure that they are safe for placement.

How long are animals kept at the shelter?

There are no time limits on animals (aside from their required minimum hold times). As long as an animal remains in good health, has a temperament that makes it suitable to be placed in a home as a companion animal, and there is space available at the shelter for it, it may stay.

How often do new animals go on the adoption floor?

There is no way to predict what animals may arrive at the animal shelter, or when. The population changes frequently, although typically more puppies and kittens arrive during the spring and summer months. Visiting www.loudoun.gov/animals or calling 703-777-0406 is the best way to find out what's available (there is not a "waiting list" for animals).

How old do puppies and kittens have to be before they can be adopted?

All puppies and kittens must be at least eight weeks old and weigh at least 2 pounds before they can be spayed or neutered and made available for adoption.

How do you decide whether or not an animal is "adoptable"?

The evaluation of an animal's adoptability begins when the animal arrives and continues throughout the entire time the animal is at the shelter. In order to be considered adoptable, the animal must be socialized enough that it can be safely handled by staff through day-to-day cleaning, a physical exam, etc.

What's the best age to have a pet spayed/neutered?

Puppies and kittens can be spayed as early as 2 months of age with no adverse effects; in fact, early-age spaying/neutering actually maximizes the health and behavioral benefits of sterilization, including avoiding spraying, and eliminates the risk of certain cancers. The old

myths that animals should have one litter before they are spayed/neutered, that they need to be at least 6 months old before having surgery, or that early-age spay/neuter causes an increased risk of incontinence or can stunt animals' growth are not supported by scientific evidence.

What vaccinations, etc., do the animals receive while they are at the shelter?

Dogs and cats adopted from the shelter are given a combination distemper vaccination, a deworming medication, and are microchipped. Animals are not vaccinated against rabies, since this vaccination must be administered by a licensed veterinarian (adopters should have their new pet vaccinated against rabies as soon as possible after leaving the shelter).

Do all of the cats and dogs get spayed and neutered when they are adopted?

Yes, it is required by Virginia law, and there are no exceptions unless a veterinarian has determined that surgery would be dangerous for the animal. The sterilization procedure is performed by a participating veterinarian within the County of Loudoun. Aside from eliminating the chance of unwanted litters, spaying and neutering eliminates the chances that pets will get certain types of cancers and other conditions and reduces unwanted behaviors like roaming and marking territory.

Can you guarantee that adopted pets are healthy?

Every effort is made to vaccinate every animal and treat them for known medical conditions; however, it is not possible to conduct extensive health screenings for each animal. If an animal has, or is likely to have, a specific medical problem, it will be disclosed it to adopters in advance so that they are prepared for what they are likely to have to deal with, in terms of both special care requirements and expense.

What is the Gray Whiskers Club?

Animals that are 7 years of age and older are members of the "Gray Whiskers Club" in order to give adopters a special incentive to take them home. As members of the Club, their adoption fee is cut in half (although the spay/neuter fee still applies, if the animal is not yet altered).

Are there any special challenges associated with adopting a Gray Whiskers Club member?

Just as with people, older animals are more prone to age-related health problems such as arthritis, dental problems, etc. Your vet should be able to assist you with creating a health care regimen that will help your new senior pet live as long and healthy a life as possible.

On the other hand, Gray Whiskers Club members are often well- socialized, calm, easy going pets that may more easily acclimate to a new home as they are often accustomed to living with a family. They may already be housebroken, leash trained, and most always have a lot of love to give.

Why can't I see all of the animals in the shelter when I come in to adopt?

Animals are not made available for adoption right when they come in to the shelter, for a variety of reasons: some will be returned to their owners, some are involved in Animal Control

investigations, and some simply have not been assessed to ensure that they are safe to be adopted into new homes. Information about all of these animals is kept confidential until they have been officially cleared for adoption.

What kind of pet is best for kids?

Any type of pet can be great for kids, as long as it fits in well with the household overall. Parents often get a pet for their kids based on the promise that the kids will care for it – don't believe them! Kids have great intentions, but inevitably the responsibility for the care and welfare of the pet will fall on the parents. Be sure that whichever pet you choose fits your lifestyle and interests, not just your kids' preference, so you won't consider it a burden when the kids' interest wanes.

Is the shelter a "no-kill" facility?

The Loudoun County Animal Shelter is not a "no kill" facility. It is a completely open-access adoption facility, meaning that the shelter accepts any animal that is brought in from within Loudoun County, regardless of age, medical condition, or behavior.

What are the steps for adopting an animal?

A complete list of steps in the adoption process can be found by clicking [here](#).